(c) India and Japan have signed a Joint Statement in December, 2006 during the visit of our Prime Minister to Japan for a strategic and global partnership between the two countries, which also envisages stepping up of Indo-Japan economic engagement.

Reduction in import duty on rubber

4454. SHRI ABDUL WAHAB PEEVEE: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Kerala Government has urged the Central Government to stop the move for reduction in import duty on rubber from Thailand;

(b) if so, the details of the request received; and

(c) the reaction of Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Kerala Government has raised concerns regarding reduction of import duty on natural rubber and its effect on the economy of Kerala. The natural rubber carries an import duty and there has been no change in the duty structure. Government of India has also kept all the traded forms of natural rubber (NR) in the negative list of various Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and its import is closely monitored by the Government.

Objections to import of Indian mangoes by Japan and USA

4455. SHRIMATI N.P. DURGA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Japan is not importing our mangoes, citing that our mangoes are not vapour heated;

(b) whether it is also a fact that USA has also refused to import our mangoes, citing that they are not free from bacteria;

(c) if so, whether Government have decided to set up two vapour heat plants in Andhra Pradesh; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) and (b) Import of Indian mangoes in U.S. & Japan was not permitted citing the presence of fruit flies and stone weevil. Now both Japan & USA have lifted the ban provided the mangoes are given vapour heat treatment (for Japan) or are irradiated (for USA).

(c) and (d) Two vapour heat treatment plants are being set up by Andhra Pradesh at Nuzwid and Tirupati by the AP Industrial Development Corpn. Ltd.

No approval to fresh SEZ applications by BoA

4456. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Board of Approvals (BoA) for SEZs is not going to consider any fresh applications, other than those focusing on conversion of in-principle approval to formal approval in 19 cases;

(b) if so, the reasons for not considering fresh applications;

(c) whether any SEZ pertains to Andhra Pradesh in the list of 19 SEZ applications;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) for how many SEZs the BoA has granted formal approval so far and how many hectares of land would be required for them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) to (d) No, Sir. All applications, including applications for conversion from in-principle to formal approvals, duly recommended by the State Government concerned, are considered by the Board of Approval (BoA). The BoA meeting held on 9th May 2007 considered applications for conversion of in-principle approval to formal approval. No such request for conversion was pending from Andhra Pradesh.

(e) After the Special Economic Zones Act, 2005 came into effect on 10th February 2006, 237 formal approvals were granted for setting up SEZs of which three have been withdrawn/cancelled. the land involved in the 234 valid formal approvals is about 33,800 hectares.